

# Kyodan

## News Letter

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### Thirtieth Anniversary Issue

#### WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE KYODAN?

Kyodan Shimpo Editor Keiji Kuniyasu asked world friends on the occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Kyodan, June 24.

"...that the Kyodan will show how to take part in and help to mold, and take responsibility for a society in which it is a minority, without becoming enclosed in the ghetto of its own concerns...."

John O. Barksdale, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

"...that the Kyodan can avoid, at least in part, the mistakes which we, the 'older churches', have made constantly: i. in our verbal struggles (as if by words decisions could be made!); ii. with our perversion of power, particularly through money; iii. with our religious blessing of a national and cultural feeling of superiority...."

Walter Boettcher and Reinhard Groscurth, Evangelical Church of the Union, Germany

"...that the Kyodan will be led by the Spirit through the pain and struggle of the present time to achieve a vital, resilient, and abiding relationship of koinonia, doxology and propheteia...."

Charles Germany, The United Methodist Church, U.S.

"...that the Kyodan will be increasingly aware of her calling to be a voice for the masses of the people of Asia in their continuing struggle against various forms of Western and Asian imperialism...."

Joseph M. Smith, Christian Church, U.S.

"...to a much greater contribution to theological thinking--to the development of an understanding of God and what He has done in Christ that springs from ways of thought and are truly indigenous, arising out of the rich cultural and spiritual heritage that is yours in the East...."

Eugene C. Blake, World Council of Churches

"...how can the Kyodan prepare itself in prayer to play that prophetic role in Japan to remind Japan as a nation neither to be an unconscious aggressor in international relations (politically, economically and otherwise) nor to be an unconcerned spectator in the attempts of nations in the rest of Asia to achieve selfhood and development...."

U Kyaw Than, East Asia Christian Conference



## - - THIRTY YEARS - -

On the occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Kyodan, being observed on June 24, it seems appropriate to recall the progression of events, of which the current situation in the Kyodan is one part, The Rev. George Hanabusa, executive secretary, Committee of Ecumenical Ministries, in addressing the Board of World Mission of the United Church of Canada, recently spoke of these events in the context of Forming, Conforming, and Reforming:

FORMING

1872 The first Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan in 1859 and the first Protestant Church was established in 1872. It was called the Japan Kirisuto Kyokai, or the Japan Christian Catholic Church. It was a supra-denominational church and testified to the earliest characteristic of the church in Japan as being a non-denominational church, not a branch of the mother church abroad.

However, in spite of the efforts of the earliest missionaries to establish this Japanese Church, perhaps because of the policies and pressures of European and North American mission boards, denominational churches came into existence. From the earliest days, however, a spirit of unity was fostered.

1941 Eighty-two years later, the Kyodan was established as thirty-four denominations came together as a result of the Religious Bodies Law promulgated by the Ministry of Education. Two things need to be said about this enforced merger. It came about, to be sure, as a result of government pressure. On the other hand, it brought to realization the dream of the earliest missionaries of a truly united ecumenical church in Japan.

How did the Kyodan look at the event twenty-six years later?

In the Confession of Responsibility in connection with World War II promulgated in the name of the Moderator, the Rev. Masahisa Suzuki, on Easter Sunday, 1967, we read:

At the time of the founding of the Kyodan the Japanese government then under pressure asked that all religious bodies be brought together and that they cooperate with the national policy to bring the war to a victorious end. Since the time that the Gospel was first presented in the early Meiji Era, Japanese Christians had desired to establish an evangelical Church in Japan, by the merging of denominations. Therefore, they entered into the Union and the Kyodan was established, taking advantage of an order of the Government. Concerning this founding and the continued existence of the Kyodan we recognize, with deep fear and gratitude that, even in our failures and errors, the Providence of God, "The Lord of History," was at work.

CONFORMING

1946 The Kyodan General Assembly re-affirmed the Constitution it had adopted in 1941. Some groups withdrew, primarily confessional churches and some fundamentalist factions. However, without government pressure, the delegates, in freedom and without fear, voted to stay together.

1954 The General Assembly adopted the present Confession of Faith.



- 1960 The General Assembly approved the "Fundamental Policy on Mission," basically a two-pronged policy: taishitsu kaizen, freely translated as "the re-energization of the body" and dendoken dendo or "larger parish evangelism."
- 1962 The Kyodan issued "A Statement on the Preservation of the Constitution of Japan," The General Assembly affirmed its support of Japan's Peace Constitution and warned that "there are anti-democratic signs....now in progress, to amend our constitution; further, we oppose wholeheartedly any enactment or law or policy that is aimed at destroying the spirit of this Constitution."
- 1963 "Principles relating to Ecumenical Cooperation" were adopted, influenced by the experiences of the war period, when the Kyodan was a nationalistic Church supportive of government policies with very few individual exceptions.
- 1966 "The Fundamental Policy for Social Action in 1966" was adopted.
- 1967 "The Confession of Responsibility in Connection with World War II" was issued, a confession that came out of anguish and reflection of pastors and laymen who reflected long on the attitudes and directions of the Kyodan during World War II.

#### REFORMING

The reforming period of the Kyodan can be said to have begun explicitly at the time of the Confession of War Responsibility, the statement on the Japanese Constitution having been the first time the Kyodan had spoken out on a social or political issues. In the direction the Kyodan has taken in its pronouncements and policies and in its reaction to the tremendous economic growth and military expansion of the so-called Japanese Self-Defense Forces, polarization has occurred between the pastors who support this political trend and those who oppose or who have reservations about it.

- 1968 The issue that brought the confrontation to a head and sharpened this polarization was the bill approved at the 1968 General Assembly in support of Kyodan's participation in the Christian Pavilion at Expo '70.

Young pastors, seminary students and laymen have pointed out that this was inconsistent with the policies of the Kyodan and a contradiction of the Confession of War Responsibility, inasmuch as it represents support for the banking-industrial-neo-military group that has been attempting to destroy the Peace Constitution and lead Japan down a path similar to that which led to World War II.

- 1970 The General Assembly scheduled for Oct. 27-30 was postponed.

- 1971 Young pastors, seminary students and laymen have confronted the church with demands in such a way that parliamentary church government for the time being has come to a halt, and four out of sixteen districts have not yet been able to meet and elect delegates to the General Assembly, still not convened.

## AN INTERPRETATION OF RECENT EVENTS

Patience and the willingness to listen to each other--this is felt to be the key to solving the current "Kyodan problem." Two good demonstrations of this in recent weeks have been the Kanagawa district's assembly and the June nationwide meeting of church leaders, who managed to resolve impasses and participate in discussion on the place of the Confession of Faith in the church today.

In both instances groups so polarized that they have not been able to listen to one another or, in some cases, even to meet in the same room, were persuaded by a third, "middle" group to come together and share in the context of conversation rather than polarization.

What happens when there is not enough patience can be seen in the cases of Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Hyogo districts, which have not been able to come together in a common meeting because radical posers of problems felt they were not getting a fair hearing.

In all of these instances, an exhausting amount of time and emotional energy is spent on matters of procedure, which indicates to some people that the primary problem in the Kyodan today is more a gap and a lack of trust between generational and ideological groups than a disagreement over specific theological issues as such. Theological issues become banners for a battle between the "Christologists" vs the "Jesusologists" or the "social group" vs the "gospel group." As a result, the game becomes one of "topple the other fellow's banner" rather than of "finding the will of the living Lord today." (kk)

## the irony of discrimination

an excerpt from chapter 4, "the chikuho problem" from chikuho ni ikite (living in the chikuho), by mitsuhiro inukai, published by kyodan board of publication, may 1971

In 1965, Mitsuhiro Inukai, a graduate of Doshisha Seminary, moved into the depressed Chikuho mining area of Kyushu, where he has been supporting himself by driving a dump truck, teaching children not in school, conducting a Bible study class. Chikuho ni ikite is a collection of thoughts and notes published in his mimeographed Gekkan fukuyoshi during the past six years.

" "

It has been four years since I came to live in Chikuho. To be honest I must confess that during these four years I have always been overwhelmed by the depth and complexity of the problems here. Lately I have come to realize that although we speak simply of "the Chikuho problem," there are in this problem several peaks, so to speak. All are agreed that the biggest of all the peaks is the problem of coal mining, the scars of which now cover the whole of the Chikuho area. But a problem that is almost as big is the issue of "buraku" people of the former outcast group. And the third is the problem of the Koreans living in this community.

The migrant miners, although they themselves have always been looked down upon by others as "coal-mine Joads," still have thought of themselves as superior to two other groups: the "buraku" people and the Koreans.



Just by living in the village of Fukuyoshi, I have come to feel how deep and urgent is the problem of the "buraku" people and Koreans living in Japan. How dark and oppressive are the words which these people hear whispered behind their backs. Recently, a young woman in our neighboring town committed suicide by drowning. I hear that she did this because her parents wouldn't allow her to marry a "buraku" man. But this incident is only a tiny corner of a floating iceberg. The affliction and tragic suffering on the part of the "buraku" people and Koreans in our country is quite beyond our imagination.

All of this is part of the "Chikuho Problem."

The common element in all three of these problems is that of discrimination. But the irony is that while each of these groups is being discriminated against, it in turn is discriminating against others.

In Comical Stories from the Bottom of the Earth (Iwanami Shoten, paperback), Hidenobu Ueno witnesses to the fact that on the common ground of working in a mining business the above three groups have been forming cooperative relationships with each other. I think this is a very important witness. But it's even more important to find why this relationship of cooperation has been breaking down.

What is discrimination? I'm sure the word can be defined in various ways, but Saburo Takahashi, writing in Fukuin to sekai, March 1969, about the March-the-First movement\* in Korea, analyzes it as follows:

Do the Japanese recognize the "otherness" of the Koreans as people? Are they willing to face them as persons who should be spoken to as "thou"?

This is the most basic question that lies at the bottom of all the conflicts. I think discrimination means - not treating other human beings like oneself. "Yes, we are both human beings." To confess this not only by word of mouth but with the body--this is what the liberation movement is all about. This is what the aim of the literacy movement is.

And only through this kind of confession can "the Chikuho problem" be solved.

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\*refers to the movement for independence from Japan

on facing reality

the point is that we have to look squarely at the reality of the thing that we cringe from and want to look away from. we have to be willing then to try to change what we see and also to change ourselves.

what has been --- IN THE KYODAN --- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Kyodan 30th Anniversary, June 24  
2nd Pioneer Evangelism Consultation Aug. 24-26

II. Education

Sunday school children's Christmas offerings of \$12,500 are used to buy 145 wheel chairs for infantile paralysis patients (Shimpo 5/29)  
Church kindergarten heads study Morita's response to Ministry of Education Advisory Committee plan for reorganization of school system and role of church in education (Shimpo 6/19)  
Shirakawa Megumi Gakuen Home for mentally retarded children to begin in July (Shimpo 6/19)

Kyodan

Tokyo district assembled is cancelled after student interrupters appear and disrupt registration (Shimpo 6/5)  
Kyodan to entertain past moderators on occasion of 30th anniversary June 24 (Shimpo 5/29)  
Kyoto district postpones annual assembly (Shimpo 6/12)  
80 persons from across spectrum of Kyodan opinion and position meet together in Gotemba June 8-10, discussing standing committee's move from Plan C to Plan D and Confession of Faith (Shimbun 6/19)

Overseas

Dr. Kosuke Koyama, Kyodan missionary and General Dir. of South East Asia Theological School Assn. in Singapore returns to Japan June 7 for one-month visit

Social Concerns

see "Education"  
Nagoya Higher Court renders decision that Shinto-style rite is illegal in dedication of Tsu city gymnasium (Shimpo 5/29)  
Social Committee uses Christmas offerings for sick and retired pastors (Shimpo 5/29)  
Diet closes without passage of Yasukuni nationalization bill although LDP proposes discussion of it between sessions (Shimpo 6/5)  
13 persons submit petitions with 1,040 signatures of religionists opposing immigration bill (Shimbun 5/22)  
Seirei-en is to be completed in August; staff members are being sought (Shimpo 6/19)  
NCC Special Committee on Yasukuni Shrine Problem to issue English booklet as start to organizing international support for anti-Yasukuni movement

TUTS

Prof. Yoshio Inoue is dismissed in amicable agreement (Tsushin 5/25)

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